IV. DISCUSSION

Evaluation

All six individual sites and the Indiana Automotive Safety Program acknowledged the importance of evaluation. Because oftentimes funding can depend on program results, several program coordinators/administrators discussed the concern of not having a solid evaluation component in their programs. The need for a structured process for evaluating the effectiveness of their program in terms of behavior changes and knowledge retained was evident.

Critical Issues Regarding Program Longevity

Given the investment in funding, training, program development and other resources by the sites studied and by the approximately 3,500 other inspection station programs throughout the United States, careful consideration of factors affecting program longevity warrants additional discussion.

All six individual study sites gave similar responses to the question, *"What circumstances would cause the inspection station to terminate?"*

- Risk of liability
- Loss of funding
- Changes in administrative support
- Departure of program's key person or champion

Risk of Liability

Three of the six sites visited stated that potential liability to their sponsoring agency was a factor in the continued operation of their inspection station. Often the program managers were comfortable with available information as to the historical lack of actual cases, judgments and/or settlements in the United States relative to child safety seat installation matters. However, convincing legal counsel for the sponsoring agency was often difficult.

Child passenger safety program coordinators/administrators and others would benefit from the availability of a clear, concise and well annotated document to inform agency administrators and their legal counsels as to historical precedents relating to liability issues for agencies/companies sponsoring child safety seat inspection stations. Additionally, a review of child passenger safety liability coverage provided by various types of insurance products would be helpful to decision makers and child passenger safety technicians. Insurance products discussed should include standard business coverage, special event policies, individual homeowners' coverage, umbrella policies and other appropriate products.

More state child passenger safety immunity laws would also help address concern over liability issues. Often referred to as "Good Samaritan Laws," these acts typically specify that a child passenger safety technician or sponsoring organization is not liable for an act or omission that occurs in the inspection or installation of a child safety seat in a motor vehicle if the child passenger safety technician acted in good faith and within the scope of the training for which the technician is currently certified. Virginia, Maryland and Georgia had enacted these statutes as of December 2002.

See Appendix D for Maryland's child passenger safety Good Samaritan Law.

Loss of Funding

Funding for the study sites fell into three general categories: program expenses, funds for replacement seats, and salaries. In several cases, a different source or combination of sources funded each of the categories. The largest funding source for all individual programs was in-kind funding provided by the respective sponsoring agencies. These funds, typically in the form of in-kind contributions, paid the salaries and benefits for almost all inspection station personnel. The second most common source of fiscal support was State Highway Safety Offices. Another common funding source was local SAFE KIDS coalitions and/or the National SAFE KIDS Campaign. Support from both State Highway Safety Offices and SAFE KIDS programs was typically in the form of replacement safety seats. Donations from local businesses and corporations, including Rotary Clubs and AAA offices, were important sources of funds for two study sites – Hoffman Estates and Primary Children's Medical Center. Additionally, donations from families who were given replacement safety seats provided a substantial source of funds for several study sites.

a. **Program Expenses**: Expenditures for supplies, tools/equipment, program coordination, promotional materials, training, and travel were typically included in this category. While one program received a substantial grant for advertising and marketing, promotional expenses overall were relatively small. None of the sites paid for all their inspectors, technicians and/or key support staff directly from their program expenses. Two programs paid for key staff positions with grants from State Highway Safety Offices; however, these positions were supported by technical staff paid through substantial in-kind contributions. Mahube Community Council allocated Head Start Parent Training dollars to its CPS program for their program's lead technician and other program expenses.

b. **Replacement Seats:** Five of the six individual programs and the network program provided replacement seats to those in need and the sixth program referred families in need to another source for services. While the number of replaced seats varied by study site, almost all of these programs strongly believe that a significant aspect of their service to their communities is to provide safe and appropriate seats to those in need. Should funding for replacement seats be terminated, these programs indicated that they would re-evaluate their mission.

c. **Salaries – In-Kind:** The largest budget category for all sites was salaries. The sponsoring agencies of every individual study site visited absorbed a significant amount of program

expense through in-kind contributions. This was also true for inspection stations sponsored by the Indiana Automotive Safety Program. This in-kind funding typically provided salaries and benefits for inspection station personnel. In addition, office space and/or inspection space were provided through in-kind contributions for all individual study sites. In many cases, inspection station services were not defined as a primary work task for employees, but rather a task to be conducted in addition to an already full workload. Only one sponsoring agency, Primary Children's Medical Center, billed a third party for an employee's time spent performing an inspection for a child with special needs, and then only to a limited degree.

d. **State Highway Safety Office Funding:** Two of the sites in the study were funded almost entirely by State Highway Safety Office (SHSO) funds: Atlanta Fire Department and Indiana Automotive Safety Program. (Individual stations in the Indiana inspection station network received SHSO funds distributed by the Automotive Safety Program for program expenses in addition to replacement seats.)

   Four sites received some or all funding for replacement child safety seats from their SHSO: Primary Children's Medical Center, Mahube Community Council, Hoffman Estates Police Department and Pat Clark GMC-Pontiac.

   Continued availability of funds from the SHSO is critical to the continued existence of several of the child passenger safety inspection programs included in the study.

Change in Administrative Support

In the six individual sites studied, all of the child passenger safety inspection station services were considered to be an adjunct to the primary mission of the sponsoring agencies. Given the substantial in-kind costs, liability concerns, funding requirements and other issues involved in the operation of a child passenger safety inspection station, a loss or curtailment of support from agency administrators and/or individual department heads could have a devastating impact on the ability of the stations to continue services. Several program coordinators/administrators discussed this concern and acknowledged the rather tentative nature of their program efforts.

Departure of the Program's Key Person or Champion

In child passenger safety advocacy work, as in other mission-oriented efforts, a safety program is often conceived, developed and staffed by a key individual who works with almost missionary-like zeal to sustain the effort.

Programs that depend heavily on a key individual are often more at risk for survival should the key person leave the program or become unable to continue working with the safety effort. Three site administrators commented specifically on the critical role the key person at their site played in the continued operation of their respective inspection station services.

Five of the six sites studied began with a key individual who was responsible for the development of their inspection station program. Two of the programs, Primary Children's

Medical Center and Hoffman Estates Police Department, have been successful in expanding their efforts and integrating their programs throughout their entire sponsoring agencies. This integration was accomplished by institutionalizing the inspection station inspection processes, by training and scheduling a substantial number of staff members to conduct inspections, and by securing support for the inspection station's efforts from agency administrators and community groups.

The other three sites, Dagerman's, Mahube Community Council and Pat Clark Pontiac-GMC, are smaller programs with limited inspection staff, fewer community resources, and/or fewer in-agency support networks. Much of the responsibility for all aspects of the respective programs falls on the sites' key person. Consequently, continuation of these programs is heavily dependent on the continued presence of each program's key person.

In the sixth site studied, Atlanta Fire Department, the Deputy Fire Chief championed the program and provided administrative support for development of the initiative. This program was designed from inception to function within all fire stations in Atlanta. Training, work schedules for firefighters/technicians, equipment distribution, coordination, and other essential program components were integrated into the Fire Department's operations. Given continued upper level administrative support and continued funding, the effort should be sustained even if the program's champion should leave the Department.

In order to preserve the investment in safety efforts by sponsoring agencies and communities, it is important that safety programs develop support systems based on adjunct staff, community resources, volunteers (where possible) and careful documentation of operating procedures/policies. Other important activities include involving agency administration in outreach and program activities and integrating the inspection station services as closely as possible with core activities of the sponsoring agency.

Implementing New Inspection Station Programs

Agencies and individuals interested in establishing child passenger safety inspection stations should consider the following items:

Planning

1. Evaluate community need for service.
2. Identify potential funding sources – short and long term.
    a. State Highway Safety Office
    b. Fine money from Child Safety Seat Law violations deposited into a specially-designated fund for low-income child passenger safety programs and safety seats. (Minnesota and Virginia have had this type of program in place for many years.)
    c. Community/state child development grants (i.e., "Healthy Kids" initiatives)
    d. Foundations
    e. SAFE KIDS Coalitions
    f. Sponsorship by a healthcare organization (hospital, clinic, university medical training program)

g. Sponsorship by an insurance agency, automobile club, or other automotive-related business
h. Sponsorship by a local radio or television station (This type of funding is typically available for special events only.)
i. Donations from community groups, local businesses, and individuals
j. Inspection station user fees
k. Designation of child safety seats as Medicaid and/or Emergency Assistance eligible items (At present, child safety seats are not usually considered eligible for Medicaid funding; however, some states may include child safety seats as an allowable emergency assistance item.)

3. Identify/hire a coordinator for program.
4. Identify potential sources within sponsoring agency and/or from community who will refer families in need of safety seat inspection services.
5. Determine availability of Certified CPS Technicians.
6. Determine availability of Certified CPS Tech Instructors.
7. Obtain background materials on liability issues to address potential concerns from administrators.
8. Discuss potential liability issues with administration and research agency insurance coverage.
9. Identify extent of administrative support from sponsoring agency.
10. Determine level of support for substantial in-kind contributions from sponsoring agency.
11. Survey locations for inspections based on accessibility, availability on a regular basis, capacity for anticipated volume of vehicles, provisions for weather conditions, space to conduct inspections, safety for vehicles/inspectors/participants, visibility from street (if desired).
12. Determine service level to be provided based on available resources:
    a. Inspection only
    b. Inspection and replacement seat distribution
    c. Days/Hours of service
13. Determine fee policy for inspections:
    a. Free
    b. Donation Requested
    c. Fee (what level?)
14. Determine seat replacement policy:
    a. Free
    b. Donation Requested
    c. Available for purchase
    d. No seats distributed
15. Develop marketing plan.
16. Identify sources within the community that will provide safety seats for free to families unable to purchase seats.
17. Identify disposal system for unsafe child safety seats.

Administration/Operations

1. Establish policies/procedures for inspections.
2. Establish policy for distribution of seats (if applicable).

3. Select/develop forms and releases to be used (consider using standardized forms currently available).
4. Establish policy and system of data collection and record keeping.
5. Establish a training, retraining and recertification process to ensure viable inspector pool.
6. Educate both sponsoring agency staff and community network as to the availability of the inspection service, why families should have their safety seats checked, procedures for accessing the service, and guidelines for replacement seats.
7. Work to include community volunteer resources as much as possible, such as using senior groups and others for recorders, greeters, safety supervisors, etc.
8. Strive to include agency administration in outreach and program activities.
9. Work to integrate inspection stations services into core activities of sponsoring agency.
10. Involve the media in promoting and spotlighting the program.
11. Track lives saved, injuries prevented and report to media for positive recognition:
    a. Encourage customers to report crash involvement and outcomes.
    b. Develop a tracking system for replacement seats distributed and/or safety seats inspected that are involved in a crash; for example, putting a sticker on seats to flag EMS personnel to report incident.
12. Include agency administrators and stakeholders in promotional and recognition opportunities.

Evaluation

1. Review and evaluate operations, program effectiveness and promotional efforts regularly with a team of stakeholders.
2. Consider including the following information for program evaluation:
    a. Quantify volume of inspections.
    b. Compare inspection volume to promotional activities.
    c. Obtain customer feedback as to accessibility of site, clarity of information presented, perceived ability to follow recommendations, etc.
    d. Develop a follow up procedure to determine if users retain training and can demonstrate correct installation.
    e. Identify what agencies/individuals refer families to inspection station in order to better target future promotional activities.
    f. Determine patterns of misuse for future educational efforts.
    g. Obtain feedback from staff and volunteers regarding station operation, training needs, etc.
    h. Review inspection forms to determine quality of documentation.
    i. Observe inspectors to determine quality of inspections.